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No. 389

WHY AND HOW.

BY EBEN E. RExford.

You ask me why I love you, dear,
And question how I know:
Pray tell me, then, the sun must shine,
And how the roses blow.

The blossoms know the time to bare
Their sweet hearts to the sun; but
Because the sun shines on them, love,
They open, every one.

My heart was like a summer-rose
That waited for the sun,
To touch it ere it burst in bloom.
You smiled. The work was done!

How do I know? Because your name
Makes music in my breast.
Love starts and trembles into flame
To hear itself confessed.

Because my life seems all complete
The world is not so before.
I've answered all your questions, love,
And earned one kiss the more.

The Bitter Secret;
OR,
THE HEART OF GOLD.

BY GRACE MORTIMER.

CHAPTER I.

INFORMATION WANTED.—Of Ada Derwent, maiden name Rivers, native place Addiscombe, State of New York, who married Otto Montacute Derwent, in the year 1850, June 19th—or of her child, issue of said marriage. If she or said child, Room 9, No. — Warren Street, New York, they will bear of a long-unchained right now complete at their disposal, and greatly to their advantage.

Monica Derwent, only child of the above-mentioned Ada Rivers Derwent, sat by her mother's corpse, reading this announcement in the "personals" of the New York *Herald*.

She was nineteen years old; her mother had been a widow all that time; they had lived a toilsome and penurious life, and Mrs. Derwent had died yesterday of the "hard times" and now Monica had discovered this promise of prosperity in an old paper, which she had unrolled from the stems of a great sheaf of white flowers sent her by the clergyman's daughter, to lay about her dead.

It was an humbly-furnished little parlor in a tiny frame cottage, very clean and dainty, and garnished delicately with many a graceful fancy, costing nothing but natural tastes.

The body, which lay across the two white-draped windows, was that of a woman of thirty-seven, in whose features could be traced the remains of great beauty and refinement; but the slender hands which lay across her bosom were almost transparent, her face was frightened and wan, and broad streaks of gray gleamed among her thick, wavy black hair; it was painfully evident that not only sorrow of heart, but actual privation, had brought her to this premature bier.

Monica Derwent was utterly unlike her mother—her features wanted the graceful harmony of hers; also the expression indelibly engraved upon the dead visage, of soft dependence and habitual melancholy, was replaced on the daughter's by one of spirited power and haughty pride; pale, famine-pinched and poorly clad though she was, she would have attracted a second glance anywhere, through the mere power of her princely air, and the dark dignity of her presence. One rare beauty she possessed, large fine shape, lustrous eyes, black and expressive, her hair, too, had it been artistically dressed, would have won praise for its ebony hue and silken gloss.

In truth, what with her tall, slim figure, which only wanted filling out—poor hungered body that it was—and her proud, innocent, significant face, all she lacked was food, dress, and a fortunate expression to make her pass as a more than usually fine woman.

For more than an hour she had sat poring over the advertisement addressed to her mother, motionless, head, and deaf; she was looking back over those nineteen years which her mother and she had trodden hand in hand, illumined as they now were by the light of this most unexpected announcement.

The paper was two months old.

Two months ago her mother's strength had been, though ebbing, at full enough tide for Dr. Seymour, the village physician, to say to her in his offhand way:

"You're all right, madam—sound at the core. Nothing to be afraid of, if you take a rest and feed up. Your trouble comes from nothing but debility. You don't eat enough and you work too much. Get off to the seaside, and drink cream and eat chickens. That's my present advice."

Timidly informed that she could not take time to rest, nor afford such expensive luxuries as seashells, cream and chickens, she had shrug his muscular shoulder in its fine broadcloth coat, pouted out his full red mouth portentously, and dashed off an iron and quinine mixture, to be taken three times a day, for six weeks; and then, accepting her two dollars with all the graceful unconsciousness with which he would have accepted the five-dollar fee from the wealthy Mrs. Million, relict of the late cracker-merchant of that name, had bowed her smilingly out of his richly-furnished consulting-room, and stood in the next in line from his elegant waiting-room.

And this foolish woman had crushed up the prescription in her thin, hot nervous hand, as she slowly wended her feeble way home through the driving sleet, for she had no weekly seventy-five cents to spare, the sum which the strengthening mixture would call for, so why should she distress poor Monica with the sight of the prescription? And she sat down to her work again, trying to see the exquisite stitches through the red motes that were dancing before her eyes, and to hide the creeping chills which ran through her shadowy frame, in spite of the sparkling, well-swept fire, which Monica had just lit in time for her return having "furthered" her. She told the satisfactory news that Dr. Seymour said she had no organic disease, and was only weary.



At the moment that Monica fixed hers upon these strange eyes, she caught a look, indescribably wild.

transparent to blind you. This matter that you have distressed yourself so much about, is the one secret I must keep from all the world—even the dear girl. It is a very bitter secret, it has crushed the spirit to the earth for all the years of my widowhood. The world only pleases God to remove it. I should be at peace, and happy with you, my darling good child. If I were to tell it to you, your dear young life would be overshadowed with a curse which would embitter every hour. And yet it is not for this reason alone that I keep you in ignorance of it, nor is it for my own sake, for I am utterly guiltless in the matter; but there is a person alive for whose sake I keep it, and must keep it as long as I live, and carry it to my grave with me. Now, my darling girl, you must tell the matter from your thoughts. You trust in your mother's integrity, do you not? You are my only child, and she has always told me, I am sure; those ideas which distress you were only the natural efforts of filial affection to fathom a mystery which obviously clouded your mother's life. All I can say in explanation, dear, is, that as long as I live I am bound to put aside, and secretly to forward to—some one—somewhere—half of whatever income I may get; even if it were but one dollar a year I must part with fifty cents of it."

And then she had glided away, with a very pained and round look on her usually meek face, to a hidden haughtiness of mien that struck cold to Monica's heart, suggesting, as it did, certain hidden depths in her mother's character, and events in her past, that came like iron bands pushing them a little apart.

And although the high-minded daughter had never again whispered another inquiry, or looked curiously; but had put entire faith in her mother's integrity, according to her gentle request, and driven the secret from her mind, as far as that lay in her power, still, we say, there had not passed one day since, that she had not been visited by the consciousness of a something sinister and disastrous brooding over her home.

Had she not been a being, whose life was handed over to a mysterious being, as long as she had been?

That was the gist of her mother's secret.

But Monica thanked God every day, with passionate gratitude, that she could believe her mother guiltless, and cling to the belief with a desperate hold, heaping only the more love upon her, devoting to her the more assiduously fond and unwearyed services; fronting fate for her with the loftier courage; for Monica Derwent had reserves of pride and heroism in her warm, deep heart, that even she herself could not fathom as yet, and often marveled much at her own haughty impulses, so unlike the soft, passive, yielding nature of her sweet mother.

The night before Mrs. Derwent died, she had beckoned her child to her pillow, and with a pale and thankful smile had murmured in her ear:

"Let me avenge her—that is all I shall live for!" panted Monica, Derwent, and stooping, she sealed her vow by a long, anguished kiss on her mother's dead lips.

The funeral was over.

Her expenses, handsomely as they were, had drained Monica's slender purse to a low ebb. She had seen the latest *Herald*, and the advertisement was running in it still. She was resolved to answer it—to hear what these strangers had to tell her about the "unclaimed right," which she believed to be connected with her mother's secret.

But she was so penniless, that whilst the kind-hearted neighbors were cheering her by the reminder that she would at least be little worse pecuniarily by her invalid mother's decease, since her salary as the village teacher was quite adequate to the supply of her own wants, she was casting about in her mind how she should prove money enough not only to remain there for some time to come.

She gathered together all her resources; set her cottage in order for an absence, long or short, she knew not which; and without explaining anything to anybody, except to tell the Rector that she was going to New York on business, she left Loangerie the day after the funeral.

And so calm and self-possessed was she when she went from among them, that all Loangerie looked to see her back at her desk, as before, glad to accredit her with a few days' holiday and change since her bereavement had been sore, and the poor young thing, though she had made little outward moan, seemed to be stricken for death herself.

But busy was the tongue of rumor when the Monday came—Tuesday, Wednesday—a week, two weeks—month—a year—years—and she never came back to Loangerie!

And it had come too late—too late.

That was always the heartrending refrain of all Monica's thoughts; here was help for her mother, and it was too late.

"My child, I had hoped that you noticed nothing that could disturb or perplex you; I see now that my poor little diplomacy is too

ing lawyers, not so long in practice as to pass by indifferently any chance of emolument, crooked or straight, and thirsting to manage this matter with benefit to themselves.

They received the young lady from the country, who introduced herself as the only child of Mrs. Ada Derwent, nee Rivers, of Addiscombe, with due caution and reserve, until satisfied with the secret of her identity; and, although they were at first greatly disappointed to learn of the decease of Mrs. Derwent herself, they soon accommodated themselves to the inevitable, and set about manipulating the survivor to the best of their ability.

Having gleaned from her a distinct account of her mother's and her own history during the past nineteen years, they coolly desired her to come to them that day week, when they hoped to have something definite to tell her about "the important matter in connection with which they had been advertising at immense expense," as they carefully reminded her, for over four months.

As they were resolute, Monica had perforce to obey, and retired to her boarding-house to wait, feeling a growing interest and excitement, as she noted the portentous manner of the lawyers, and vainly tried to guess at the news they had to tell.

Of course she could guess pretty correctly the use they made of that week; that they were sifting her story and proving its truth; but so judiciously did they conduct their inquiries, sending an agent to Loangerie to investigate, *sub rosa*, that not a soul in the straight-laced little townlet dreamed of what was being done.

Having returned on the specified day, Miss Derwent found herself greeted with fervor, placed in the seat of honor, and both the lawyers bustled about her, vying with each other in showing her how they honored her.

This sovilely angered and disgusted the proud-spirited girl.

Of course, she knew this was a money matter; guessed at some fine legacy or inheritance, and measured the courtesy of the astute men of affairs by the probable bulk of the fortune.

"Be good enough to come to the point without ceremony," she said, haughtily, "as you see I am too humbly born and bred to appreciate or express complimentary compliments. And since the matter did not interest my mother was gone, it can seem of very little moment to me, in my present state of mind. What care I now what befalls?" she said, bitterly, her low, stern tones sounding in strange contrast to the fluttered jubilation and gratulation of theirs.

"Ahem! The family spirit!" chuckled Mr. Kornér, surreptitiously nudging his partner, Mr. Price, as if her lofty tone pleased him, and redening uncomfortably when he saw that her bright eyes had detected him. "The fact is, my dear young lady, that by the merest accident we have discovered something of importance—of great importance to the wife or children of Mr. Otto Derwent."

He paused with an impressive smile, waiting for his listener; but she answered, with a gloomy look, utterly regardless of the piquant news he had hinted at:

"As there is only one thing which men in your profession think of enough importance to expend time and talent on, I can easily guess what you are about to tell me. Some relative of my long-dead father has thought of mother, and wished to assist her pecuniarily. And it is too late!"

"Wrong—altogether wrong!" said Mr. Price, with airy enjoyment, and a gallant bow; "Miss Derwent is too unworthy to come near the truth."

"What is the truth, then?" asked she, noting with a little wonder the repressed excitement of each wary visage.

"It would, perhaps, be well to state that this matter is *entirely in our hands*," said Mr. Kornér, very earnestly fixing his eyes on her, and hitching his chair a little nearer hers. "Not a soul but we two can assist you to gain your rights. The facts came to our knowledge some time ago, and we have been compelled to consider considerable expense and labor collecting information and advertising. You understand?"

"Perfectly," replied she, promptly, with some disdain. "You wish to impress upon me that your services are valuable, and that you will not continue them unless I can pay for them, and am willing to place myself in your hands. I can only say that I am penniless, and will not pledge myself to any course in the dark."

"Very good; we shan't ask you to do anything but what is perfectly just and right," Mr. Kornér hastened to assure her, "and as to your poverty, the sum of money is to be determined on it, and put it in your power to reimburse our services in the future. Which, of course, a lady of your strict sense of justice would wish to do whenever she had a chance, her husband, it insinuating.

She bowed, with a slight smile; somehow the longer they talked of this mysterious business the more she doubted the wisdom of confiding too much in the crafty pair.

"Just tell her distinctly what it is," put in Mr. Price in an anxious aside; "she can't possibly realize the position until she sees it."

She did not notice him in his chair, and with a bland face and congratulatory tone of voice, spoke as follows:

"In the course of a lawyer's practice many secrets leak out, which those concerned thereby never supposed would come to mortal ears. This is an instance: a secret which has been kept for nineteen years has come to our ears, and affects strongly your future, my dear young lady. I may begin the disclosure by saying that this secret is connected with that habit of the late Mrs. Derwent, of handing over to an unknown party the half of her money."

"Stop!" exclaimed Monica, suddenly; her eyes were wide-spread, her cheeks flushed, and her lips trembled. "My mother deliberately kept this matter from me: even on her death-bed, she said it was best for me not to know what her secret was; so I will not hear it from you. If you cannot explain this business without betraying my mother's secret, I shall go away as ignorant as I came."

"Hem—hem—a streak of the blood, eh?" muttered Mr. Kornér to his colleague; "no use insisting here; might as well try to move the Palisades, eh?" and with a complacent chuckle he resumed. "Very good, Miss Derwent; we can easily avoid trenching on the forbidden subject. For nineteen years you have supposed

CHAPTER II.

"MY FATHER! I WILL NEVER OWN HIM FOR MY FATHER!"

MONICA found in room No. 9, Warren Street, Messrs. Kornér & Price, two driving and thriv-

your father was dead; for nineteen years your mother knew he was alive, and residing at his English estate, Dornoch-Weald."

"WHAT?" cried Monica, springing to her feet. "My father alive—oh, impossible!" She glared from one to the other—oh, their faces inexorably repeated the assertion; she suddenly wheeled and walked to one of the windows, where, with her face hidden, and her hands tremblingly clasped over her breast, she remained still as a stone.

But a storm was raging through her soul; the very depths of her nature were stirred. The idea of a father had ever been but an abstract one to her, the theme had never been dwelt upon by her mother—she had always seemed to shrink from it with nervous, pale pain; and Monica had settled it in her mind that he had been so passionately beloved, and so tragically lost in the first year of marriage, that her mother would carry the wound raw and bleeding to her grave.

Yet he had been alive all the while, and, what was it they had said about an estate? He was then a rich man, living in wealth and ease, and her mother—had died—of want.

As the girl's thoughts reached this climax she stiffed a sharp cry as of one stung, and went back to face the whispering lawyers.

"Go on, what else?" she demanded peremptorily.

Mr. Korner took up the narration where he had dropped it.

"Your father is alive to this day; and had your mother lived to answer our advertisement in person we would have reinstated her in her rights without the slightest delay. She being unfortunately deceased, we transfer our good offices to you; and whenever you choose to put yourself in our hands we shall present you to Mr. Otto Derwent, and claim for you your legal rights as his daughter."

"But—but why were they separated?" faltered Monica, still too stunned to admit a thought of her own position.

"That is part of the secret your mother deserved from you," answered the lawyer; "this much I can tell you, however, they separated through no fault of your mother's. She was utterly blameless, the victim of a slander, and of the bitter pride of Derwent. Your father comes of an ancient, proud race, and notwithstanding that really seems to have loved his young wife (who was extremely pretty and elegant, they tell me, although only the daughter of a country schoolmaster), he was quite able to desert her at a moment's notice seven months after the marriage, and to go home to his fine estates, and never see her face again.

To do him justice I will mention that he intended to have sent her all the money she could desire, and began by doing so; but she had her pride too, poor and penniless, was also too fond of him, and she fled from the home he had left her in, and hid herself in the little out-of-the-way hole you came from; so that for nineteen years they have not communicated with each other, and he does not know whether she is dead or alive.

And he is stone enough never to trouble his head about the matter; but lives the life of a country gentleman, on one of the finest estates in —shire, whilst she, poor soul, was starving herself to satisfy the rapacity of a swindling villain who took advantage of her."

"Take care—that's the forbidden subject," interposed Mr. Price, who was reading the expressive face of the lawyer with breathless interest, and admiring it as a vivid changes.

"Will you now be good enough to inform me what your intentions, with regard to my mother were, when you advertised for her?" demanded she, between her teeth.

"Oh, you can easily guess them," said Mr. Korner, cheerfully. "We saw a chance to render justice to two people who had been parted by a mistake, to set the wife in her own place and to clear her reputation in the eyes of her husband. We proposed to put each party in possession of some facts which had come to our knowledge, to effect a reconciliation, and to have had the pleasure (and profit) of making two lives happy."

"We now propose, the wife being ready to introduce your daughter, with all the proofs of your identity in her hands to your father, who is yet ignorant of your existence—when you will, without the slightest doubt, receive due recognition as the only child of a very wealthy man."

Monica sat still as death for a few minutes, eying her counselors with slowly gathering scorn. When her heart was full to bursting, her small teeth set in her lip, and her glance flashing with pent-up fire, she burst out passionately:

"And this is my poor mother's history, is it? Scorned—betrayed—abandoned—perishing in want—because he believed a slander! Oh, God! what a life!"

She wrung her hands, in a gust of grief; it was easy to see how intensely the proud fine soul of the daughter had loved and believed in her haughty mother.

"And you wish me to go to the man who did this, and to fawn at his foot for my rights?" she cried flashing from grief to the most scathing fury and contempt. "You expect me to go, straight from the grave of my mother, with the memory of her skeleton form and unhappy eyes, and my only reminiscences of her, torn-worn and sad—to that noble estate where my father lives luxuriously and thinks scornfully of his poor young wife! Why, gentlemen, are you human, that you think I could do it? I should curse him, and call on God to avenge my mother's blood on him; but, instead of kneeling in humble duty for his painful greeting! Ha! ha! ha! My father, Frothingham!"

She was rapidly walking from end to end of the office now, panting with excitement and emotion, and flinging glances of the utmost dejection and disdain at her world-behind counselors.

Mr. Price, whose softer manners made him usually successful with the lady-clients, approached her with deep solicitude, delicately tempered with deference, and begged her, for her own sake, to calm herself, and look practically upon the matter.

"Just think of it, dear Miss Derwent," he plaintively urged. "How few in this world of hard work and crowding competition can, like you, from direct want and friendlessness, rise to wealth and refined home! Be a rich man's only daughter—with every chance in life of being his sole heiress—heirress to her mother's wrongs—the self-imposed avenger. Oh, what a comedy!"

She laughed, sitting there by herself, so loudly and wildly that footsteps came hurriedly to her door through the long strange passage, and ears listened in affright, marveling whether the new boarder was going mad.

She muffled her hysteria, laid her head down on the meager little marble-topped table, beside the frowsy map of New York, bound in ill-smelling leather, her head that was so hot, while her feet were like ice, and she tried to soften her heart, and to pray to God, with whom her dear martyred mother was; but she could not sleep in humble duty for his painful greeting!

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She had so far resolved, that she would follow the lawyer's wishes in that she would go to England and confront Mr. Derwent, but not in the character of his heiress expectant. Not that.

As her mother's avenger.

By-and-by as the whirl of her details abated, she could recall practical details.

And among the first she remembered, with a great pang of disappointment, that she had not even allowed them to give her Mr. Derwent's address, and how was she to find him? Not for worlds could she again present herself to the pair who had plotted to entrap her in her rights at the expense of her self-respect.

Fortunately they had no clue to her present whereabouts, and could not, were they ever so anxious, trace her; and one of her instant resolutions had been to elude them altogether, and make her way, unsuspected by living soul, to Mr. Derwent's mansion, enter it in disguise, and after reconnoitering, she would be better able to cope with the cruel nature which had sacrificed her mother.

Suddenly she recalled the name they had mentioned—Dornoch-Weald, in —shire.

She sat up with sparkling eyes; she had found the clue; it would be easy to trace the country seat of a wealthy county family, once she was in that country.

Before she rose from that fateful reverie, Monica Derwent had determined upon her course, a course which was to lead her all the way of its tremendous possibilities, through as strange and terrible an experience as ever madman dreamed, or the King of Evil ever placed before unwary foot.

are rushing on at a mad pace. Your father—"

"Do you persist in the term?" cried she, impetuously, "Then I shall not stay to be insulted by it."

She hurried, with burning cheeks, to the door; the pair sprung with one accord to arrest her, and she turned, between them, clasped her hands, and looking Heavenward, said solemnly:

"So help me God, I repudiate Mr. Otto Derwent as my father, even as he repudiated Ada Rivers as his wife."

"But you are terribly mistaken—when we reveal all, if you would but promise to place yourself in our hands, we could disclose enough upon her mother—she had always seemed to shrink from it with nervous, pale pain; and Monica had settled it in her mind that he had been so passionately beloved, and so tragically lost in the first year of marriage, that her mother would carry the wound raw and bleeding to her grave."

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She hurried, with burning cheeks, to the door; the pair sprung with one accord to arrest her, and she turned, between them, clasped her hands, and looking Heavenward, said solemnly:

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CHRISIE.

BY HAWORTH.

I am thinking to-night of a lady,
As fair as an hour, I ween;
As bright as a vision of Heaven,
And as sweet as a poet's dream.
On her sweet face the dearest smile lingers,
On her hair the light loves to rest,
And her ripe lips seem fashioned for kisses—
Her lily hands made to be pressed.
In her bosom all virtues are center'd;
To deck her all graces combine;
Her heart's a fit dwelling for angels—
A beautiful temple and shrine.
In the glance of her bright eye is beaming
The light of a pure soul within,
And her song, like the birdsong, betokens
A spirit that knoweth no sin.

Oh! I love you, winsome lady,
More than miser loves his gold—
More than saintly hope of Heaven,
More than all that earth can hold!
And my heart, within the shadow
That must lie our lives between,
Saddly will be brooding ever
O'er the joys that "might have been."

**Detective Dick;
THE HERO IN RAGS.**

BY CHARLES MORRIS,
AUTHOR OF "WILLFUL WILL," "NOBODY'S
BOX, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE DETECTIVES' RECEPTION.

We must leave Dick Darling awhile in his mysterious disappearance, and pay a flying visit to Philadelphia, to the residence of our government detectives, Jack Bounce and Will Frazer.

Somehow we always find them at home and in much the same position, Jack with his feet on the window sill, in fat and hearty enjoyment of life, and Will in a lean fret about the desperate discouragements of business.

Not that they spend all their time thus. They are expert and active in their vocation, and are shrewdly working up the minor clues which they have so far gained from Dick. As yet, however, their success has not been great. Sol Sly, in particular, has taken warning from his temporary arrest, and has fallen back into the most correct man of business.

"Will, it is devilish slow work Jack," protested Will, pacing the floor in his uneasy way. "I know the Jew has something to do with it; but we can't nail him."

"The whole crew of them have taken flight for the present," was Jack's rejoinder. "Since that last note was offered they have gone back into their skins. They must have smelt a rat somewhere."

"Not they. I have just heard that it has been set afloat on the New York market. A full dozen of them have turned up in the banks, and the Lord knows how many are adrift."

"So much the better," exclaimed Jack, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"How do you make that out?" Will sharply questioned.

"The more daring they are the better our chances, that is all. I don't like to see them drawing back into their holes."

"That boy is a shrewd young rogue," Will suddenly declared.

"Aha! you've come to that opinion, then?"

"Yes. He has put us on the only track yet. And he knows more than he cares to tell."

"All in good time. I have great faith in Dick. He has some big thing in his eye."

Their conversation was interrupted by a knock upon the door. Will hastened to open it. It was a chambermaid who announced:

"There's a lady in the rear parlor wishes to see you."

"Ah! a young lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. We will be there."

"That's the way; as soon as a fellow gets comfortably settled," muttered Jack, rising heavily from his chair. "If it wasn't a young lady, Will, I would leave you to see her, but you are too soft-hearted to be trusted alone with the girls."

"I'm!" cried Will, laughing. "Why, my heart is a millstone compared with the soft affair you carry about in that bosom of yours."

"All right," and Jack uttered a deep sigh.

"Slander won't die out while this world lives."

"I suppose I shall have to bear my share of it."

"Yes, poor martyr," and Will slapped him heartily on the shoulder as they descended the stairs. "Folks will never appreciate your peculiar hard-heartedness."

Jack looked with eyes of admiration on the beautiful face of the young lady who advanced a step to meet them as they entered the parlor. She was seemingly too nervous to quietly await their entrance.

"You will excuse my disturbing you," she said, in sweet voice. "I called upon you regarding a matter about which I have been rather uneasy."

"Certainly, miss. We shall be glad to help you, spoke out Jack gallantly, helping himself to a chair, while Will, with greater gallantry, handed out to the lady.

"I am told that you are government detectives, and are concerned here in seeking out the counterfeiters, who have issued so many false notes."

"It seems that you have been detected," she confessed, with a faint smile. "My information came from a good source."

"So it appears," admitted Will. "What can we do for you, miss?"

"Of course you are aware of the arrest of Mr. Spencer, on the charge of being connected with these forgers!"

"Oh, certainly," and Jack drew up his chair with quick interest.

"I believe I know he is innocent," she continued, earnestly; "but I am not conversant with the particulars of the charge against him. Will you be kind enough to tell me if it is a very serious case?"

Her voice trembled as she spoke. Jack's face was full of kindly feeling as he replied:

"I am sorry, miss, that I do not know more about it. This arrest has been made by the Pinkerton officers. I do not put much faith in it."

"I thought you would know all about it," she said, falteringly.

"No. Only the general features of the charge have been made public yet," answered Will. "We know no more than you of its hidden point, which will only come out upon the trial. Our investigations have taken a different direction."

"That was one of my objects in coming here," she now answered, with an eager light

in her face. "From what you know of the real criminals, from your long and close investigation, you can point suspicion in the proper direction; you can assure me that the evidence against him is of no value."

Jack coughed in an embarrassed manner, while Will had sudden business at the window, leaving his associate to explain the valuable results of their researches.

A knock at the door was a welcome diversion. Will hastened to open it, and found the same chambermaid who had before knocked at their door.

"A letter for Mr. Frazer," she announced. "And there is a man down stairs, sir, as wants to see you both."

"Very well. Tell him we will see him in a few minutes," answered Will, impatiently, partly shutting the door, and hastening to open the letter.

"You know the charges against Mr. Spencer?"

"About the counterfeit notes being found in his room? Oh, yes."

"It has a serious look."

"But I know it must have been the work of some enemy," she cried, in an excited tone.

"Excuse me," interrupted Will. "This is a letter from Boston, Mr. Bounce."

"Aha! any trace of the parties?"

"Yes; the whole story is true. Mrs. Milton still lives there. She was much excited by my agent's questions. She still mourns for her lost son. He could tell her nothing, who's father?"

"I am afraid we can tell her no more," Jack declared.

"The boy can. We must refer her to Dick."

"Excuse us for entering into a private conversation," apologized Jack to the lady. "It is another important matter in which we are interested. You think, then, that Mr. Spencer has been injured by an enemy?"

"I am sure of it," she responded, excitedly.

"Have you any idea by whom?"

"I cannot say," she answered, more thoughtfully.

"Think a moment. Do you know any one who has expressed enmity, or who has shown an unfriendly feeling to him?"

"None who could have sought to injure him in this way," was her slowly-given answer.

"Perhaps not. We officers have a habit of considering so many little points. Always hoping something may turn up, you know. Will you please name any person who has seemed unfriendly to him?"

"I do not know that he is specially unfriendly," reluctantly. "He repeated some slanders against Mr. Spencer, and even used some vague threats. It was but a momentary spleen, though."

"Will you be kind enough to name this person?"

"It was Mr. Andrew Williamson."

"Mr. Williamson?" spoke a quick voice at the door, in a tone of great surprise. "Excuse me," said the speaker, entering. "The girl told me to come right up; and I inadvertently overheard some of your words. What—Miss Andrews?"

"I am just going, Mr. Spencer," she said, rising, while her hand visibly trembled.

"I hope my thoughtless intrusion has not annoyed you. You spoke of slanders against me, and by Mr. Williamson's son?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, reluctantly.

"I know him," he replied. "He has seemed specially friendly to me."

"Who is this Mr. Williamson?" asked Jack Bounce, quickly.

"He is an attorney, whose office is at Fourth and Walnut."

"Have you any other known enemies?" asked Jack, as he made a memorandum of the address given him.

"I know of no others."

"You must not take a wrong impression concerning Mr. Williamson," remarked Miss Andrews, with nervous intonation. "I am sorry I used his name. He is a gentleman—hasty and prejudiced perhaps, but, of course, incapable of anything criminal."

"There are many things of course to young ladies that are not of course to us doubting Thomases," Will Frazer reminded her.

"I must go now. I am obliged to you for your kindness. Good day, Mr. Spencer."

Will politely opened the door for her. Harry Spencer stood irresolutely for a moment, then—saying hastily to the officers: "I will see you again"—hastened out after her.

Jack Bounce twisted himself round to look at Will, with a comical smile on his face.

"That's a kind of thing that don't often get in our way. A sort of pastoral poem."

"There wasn't much said, but wonderful expression of looks and tones," replied Will, laughing.

"Spencer has a hankering for her, that's sure," declared Jack. "And I fancy her taste runs to Williamson."

"Not a bit of it," and Will spoke indignant. "Spencer's her fancy, or I don't know the signs. It looks like a case of jealousy with this fellow, Williamson."

"He needs looking after, Jack."

"I think so," replied Jack. "If Spencer is innocent, then the man who is working against him is our game."

They were surprised by a third knock at the door, and the reappearance of the irrepressible chambermaid.

"A lady wishes to see Mr. Frazer," she announced.

"Very well. Show her up."

"Hadn't I best rototate?" demanded Jack, laughingly. "When ladies inquire so particularly for Mr. Frazer a chap of my size might be the way."

"You can hang round the door long enough to see her," suggested Will, with kind permission.

"I should like to have your critical opinion of my taste in ladies."

"I am a harsh critic," avowed Jack.

"Best turn me out if you wish to escape."

Before Will could reply the door opened, and his new visitor entered.

She was a lady some fifty years of age. She was very richly dressed in black silk, and had about her a striking dignity of manner. In face she had once been very beautiful, and was still a markedly handsome lady. Lines of sadness deeply channelled her face, showing principally about the mouth and the deep-set eyes.

Jack Bounce hastened to hand her a chair.

"Thanks," she replied with dignity of tone.

"Which of these gentlemen is Mr. Frazer?"

"I am he," Will responded.

"You wrote to Boston lately, inquiring about a Mrs. Milton?"

There was an intense feeling in her tone.

"I did," he replied.

"I am Mrs. Milton."

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ANIMATED BARREL

BACK again to Dick Darling I ads the course of our "over true tale."

The parties who had felt so sure of finding him in the old house were obliged to swallow

their disappointment as best they could. They stood awhile talking of what they would have done if they had only found him, and debating as to how best to continue their search.

Then one of them went heavily up the stairs. The other two remained talking for a minute.

"Is he in it?"

"No," said Cap. Parker. "He is an agent in another business in which the old man is interested. Be careful with him."

"Of course I will," replied the other. "To night then."

"At what hour?"

"Midnight. Let us follow. He may suspect something. We will meet here at the time the ghosts walk."

With a laugh he led the way up the stairs, in response to the voice of Joe Turner, who called out:

"What is keeping you two? Going rattling are you? It ain't such a pleasant old cellar."

"Taking another look round, that is all," was the reply.

Their footsteps sounded loudly in the empty rooms above. They seemed to leave the house with reluctance, as if their search had not been complete.

Not had it been, for light steps echoed their heavy ones, and boyish eyes peered curiously through one of the open windows after the departing men.

"Call round this way when you come back home," cried out Dick, mockingly. "If I ain't to home I'll tell the folks to treat you well to hot water and pitchforks. Let's see, that's Cap and Bricktop, sure enough, who's other?"

A well-built chap, good lookin', black mustache. Wonder if he's the critter that sent the express package?"

Dick's eyes continued to follow them, until they were out of sight from his point of view.

"Good-by. See you ag'in to-night," he said, with a courteous wave of the hand. "I won't go back on the pointment, if you don't."

As if thinking that he had had enough of the haunted house for one day, he made his way out.

"Must be supper time," he said; "stonishin' how soon a feller git hungry in these parts. Guess it's the country air. Didn't pick the back-bone of my dinner," called out Dick to the old man who had been so friendly.

"I've a notion you put it away yourself," said the old man gave a hearty laugh. "No matter, we'll give you a fish-bone to pick."

"Make it the back-bone then; there's better chance for polisin' on that."

"You were in the old house?"

"Guess I were."

"See or hear anything?"

They all looked up with interest for the answer.

"Nohin' but mould walls and rotten floors, dead carrots and cabbage in the cellar, and not the whisk of a mouse's tail



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Sunshine Papers.

Lovers and Husbands.

Ort! are they not nice—the men—when they are lovers? Cream puffs and caramels are not half so soft and sweet! Was there ever a woman on earth as charming as yourself, then? No, indeed; I guess not! Did any one else ever wear such a pretty dress or arrange their hair so becomingly? Did any other woman select such bewitching bonnets and have such darling little crimp's? Never! You had best not suggest such a possibility, unless you wish to be smothered, and choked, and squeezed, dreadfully. A lover thinks no woman ever dressed or looked so divinely as his own particular Angelina. Lovers are so appreciative!

But husbands! Bah! It makes one tingle all over, especially temptingly in the fingers, to think how provoking they are when you dress up your nice to please them, and expect to be told how sweet you look, and they never notice but that you have on your old torn wrapper, and are as ugly as Macbeth's witches; but sit at the table regarding you with a description of such a pretty girl that rode up with them in the car, or their partner's beautiful wife. And they never see why you do not buy a dress like Mrs. J.'s and arrange your hair like Miss C.'s; and when you bring home your new spring bonnet, they apostrophize their cigars and wonder why a woman never knows how to select a pretty bonnet; and let them see you heating a slate-pencil to curl your hair upon, and what a row they raise! Great Caesar! They guess they aren't going to have their wife burning off all her front hair. You vainly offer convincing proof that you do not injure it, and plead that you cannot curl it on paper since they object to having curl-papers poking about their bed at night. Very well! You need not clip your hair at all! It is an abominable custom, and they always detested crimp's—on you especially!

Oh! ye gods and little fishes! Is it not odd how it changes a man to hear himself called "husband"?

When a man is your lover he never can trot you around enough. He makes appointments with you at the picture-galleries, and spends whole afternoons studying engravings and paintings. He takes you to the Academy of Design, Museum of Art, and the menagerie; he walks with you around the parks, and drives with you along the famous roads; he takes you to the theater, the museum, the aquarium, the minstrels, the circus, the opera; he does you with tragedies, comedies, burlesques, and sermons; and patronizes rehearsals, concerts, societies, and balls. But when he has paid the minister a nice little fee for pronouncing you Mrs. —, what a different creature develops itself to you in your husband! Bless your dear little soul! you are lucky if you get to the theater once a year, and to hear an opera during the remainder of your natural life! He never can get away from business until after dark; you must be crazy to think he can waste his time idling in picture-galleries; and he is sure the last art collection doesn't amount to a row of pins; he cannot see why you should care to go. He doesn't approve of the

minstrels or the circus, and he never has time to walk, and the carriage is too crowded with two on a seat; you had better stay home and look after the baby. He should not think a true mother would ever want to leave her child to another's care.

Oh! you great humbugs of selfishness, you husbands! Who would ever believe that our meek, bashful, sweet, doting lovers could turn into such inconsiderate, tyrannical, cross old fellows.

He is a lover, now, so he wants your hands to be as white as snow. Do you suppose he is ever going to let you soil them? No, not he! What if you do not know how to cook? he would not allow you to do so, anyway; he intends you should always have some one to do that for you—oh, of course, the naughty, deceitful wretch! But, just wait awhile! Then he will not care whether your hands are white or not; but he will insist that you make your pies yourself, and superintend the roasting of the game. And no matter how hard you try to have them marvels of culinary success, he will always tell you of some one who can do so much better.

Wouldn't we like to shake a few of you aggravating husbands, occasionally! And we would, too, if it were not for wanting to coax money out of you for a new silk!

A PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

AN UNNEIGHBORLY NEIGHBOR.

When I was a little girl I used to think, if any one had their trials on earth that individual was myself. The greatest of all my trials came in the shape of an ancient maiden called "Miss Amy." I hadn't a very amiable disposition at that time, and it seemed all the hate in my body was vented on that female. I hated to go to her house, hated to have her come to ours, and hated to meet her in the street or see her at church. She was exceedingly poor and dependent on the charity of her neighbors, and this charity was freely bestowed, because people knew that Miss Amy "had seen better days." They were willing to put up with her uncivil address—so was I, and if it had been *only* address she was possessed of I wouldn't have minded it one bit because I was odd myself, but it wasn't all; she possessed the sin of ingratitude, and with all my faults I was always grateful. She *wasn't*, and that's one reason why I hated her.

I hated to go to her house with any delicacy, for she would always lift the cover from the meat or fish and smell of the food to see if it was fresh. As if mother would have sent her anything tainted! Sometimes she would turn up her nose at the food and say she "wasn't a pig and couldn't eat swill." Once she sent the whole tray of things back to mother because no pig had been thought of, and she wished people to understand, if she was poor, she *should* have pie with her dinner. It was what she had been used to, and she *must* have it.

I hated to have her come to the house, for she would roundly abuse all those who had done what they could for her. Mind you, she seemed to consider it a *duty* every one owed to her to help her all she could. She was once telling mother how the grocer had sent her some flour and tea and complained because he did not add some sugar to the present, and accordingly he was "the meanest man in the world," and she "hated the very sight of him." Mother, in the pleasant gentle way she had, said she had always liked Mr. D., the grocer, and that I was always praising his liberality. "Likely enough!" exclaimed Miss Amy. "No wonder Eve likes him, for he's just such another impudent heathen as Eve is herself." I was mad, and I may have said what I ought not to, but I *did* burst out with—"Well, I'm not such a heathen as to snap at the hand that feeds me. I'd be grateful for what was done for me!" That angered Miss Amy and she flounced out of the house, saying she didn't come to be insulted by such a minx as I was.

She never called again and I was glad. Mother scolded me and said I was wrong; and perhaps I was, but I didn't think so then. I had a habit of speaking my mind very plainly when I was a child and—I haven't outgrown that habit yet!

I hated to meet her in the street for she would be sure to say something disagreeable and give me unneeded advice. According to her ideas I never went out for exercise but I was romping; never went out for a walk but I wanted to show off my finery; she'd always tell me to be sure and carry home the right change—as though I'd be thief enough to keep it.

I hated to see her at church, for I always left as though her argus eye was on me, commenting on my actions and that, if she went to Heaven before I did, she would tell the Lord I ate peppermint drops or coughed, in church, hoping to have the Lord close the door against me. I wonder I didn't think the Lord would know all this before then, but I didn't. I knew if she could find anything to blame me for she'd be sure to tell the clergyman and he would become the most remarkable and exciting cruise ashore on the Sandwich Islands, in the volcano, etc., etc.

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THE SATURDAY JOURNAL

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THE KNIGHT.

BY CORINNE CUSHMAN.

Low in the valley lies the blue stream,
Clouds floating over like thoughts in a dream;
High on the hillside gleams the gray wall—
Rises the tower of the rude baron's hall.

Low in the valley the road glistered white—
Over it leaped the bold knight;
High is the window of Eleanor's bower—
Narrow and high in the grim old tower.

Low to the valley her sweet eyes are bent;
Blushes and smiles on her fair face are bent.
High to the tower his eager eyes turn—
See on the gray stones her golden curls brush.

Low beat his heart and his face was pale
When, wounded and weary, he reached the vale;
High b' at his heart and his cheek grew flushed
When the fair girl-face in the window blushed.

Low in the valley the clear stream ran,
Like thoughts of love in the heart of man;
High in the blue heaven the gay birds sing
When the hoofs of his horse on the drawbridge run.

Low shone the moon, with furtive light;
When over the bridge returned the knight;
High the rude baron had cursed his guest
For daring to speak of the hope in his breast.

Low shone the moon on Eleanor's face—
Fast the knight held her in safe embrace;
High from her lattice a silk ladder swings,
And away through the valley a hoof-beat rings.

Her Wrong-Doing.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

ALMA LEITH had never endured such a terrible temptation in all her life as the one which was holding her in its grip of steel now, as she stood at the window, with a letter in her cold trembling hand that the postman had just handed her—a letter addressed to her cousin Grace Granger, who had lived with the Leiths for years, and addressed "in Ray Mordaunt's hand-writing, the one man in all the world whom she loved.

It was a sweet April morning, and the fresh warm breath of spring stole in through the open window; the sun was sending down floods of golden blue radiance; there was the music of early song birds, and a delicate subtle fragrance of smelling buds and springing blossoms, and fresh earth.

And yet, in the midst of all this perfection and ecstasy of Nature, Alma Leith stood there, fairly shivering with real physical and mental torments as she read over and over again the handsome, bold superscription Ray Mordaunt had written to Grace Granger.

"What can he be wanting of her to write to her? Can it be possible that I have mistaken everything, and that he cares for her?"

Alma's face grew colorless and her hand shook perceptibly—the hand that held the letter over which her whole heart and soul was in uproar.

She thought of Grace's beauty, the creamy skin, the purple black hair worn as royally as a duchess wears her coronet, the lovely soulful eyes of lustrous darkness, the exquisite mouth that was red as a cleft cherry.

Then she involuntarily glanced in the mirror between the windows and saw her own reflection that she mentally described as characterless and colorless and unattractive, a bitter, desirous look came over her face.

"Of course I have been mistaken, of course he loves her! How could he help it, or any man help loving her? Why should I expect any one, least of all such a god as Ray Mordaunt to care for me?" And yet there have been times when I did think—"

If her thoughts had been spoken words there would have been the most pitiful bitterness of tone in them; as it was, her eyes had in their liquid gray depths shadows of intensest pain and desperation.

Still she turned the letter over and over, the fascination horribly strong upon her to open it and know for a positive surety, whether or not Ray Mordaunt was seeking to woo another wife while she was bestowing her own upon him.

"If I thought he had told her in this letter he loved her! If I thought so—and why should he be writing to her if not to tell her so?" Then a guilty flush came over her cheeks, and a scared look into her eyes, as she deliberately thrust the letter in a yawning crack between the old-fashioned mantel-piece and the wall—a huge wide crack that had been her and cousin Grace's delight in childhood days, into which many a nuisance had found its way. Then she sat down with her sewing, her cheeks gradually losing their heated flush, her hand resuming its customary steady hold.

"People have done meaner things, and everything is fair in love! Other girls would have gratified their low curiosity and read the letter, but I would not do that!"

And so she salved her conscience, and had become quite used to the mean act she had done by the time Grace Granger came back from her morning walk, so graceful, so beautiful, so charming.

Forty-eight hours later, and Grace herself tells Alma what strikes home to the girl's heart like steel blades.

"You will be so glad and sorry at what I have to tell you dear. Glad—aren't you? because I am so happy, oh, so happy, Alma! Ross Cecil has asked me to be his wife! Only think, I will be Ross Cecil's wife! But you will be grieved to learn that our dear old friend Ray Mordaunt has left the village. He went very unexpectedly last night without a word of good-by to any one but Ross. He left his home to go to another place, so graceful, so beautiful, so charming.

But she went bravely, almost recklessly, to Mrs. Storey's house that night. She danced, and promenaded, and played and sung, and was, as usual, chief among the chiefest, and more than even usually handsome, with her flushed cheeks and shining dark eyes in such grand relief to her apple-green floating dress, and her peach-blossom ornaments—waiting every moment to meet him face to face.

And Alma listened, with great waves of cold, thrilling pain surging over her. Mordaunt! Of course it must be Ray Mordaunt—and his wife! Could she bear to see him—and his wife? Or would she act like a silly fool and let him know how his marriage had hurt her?

But she went bravely, almost recklessly, to

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grand relief to her apple-green floating dress, and her peach-blossom ornaments—waiting

every moment to meet him face to face.

And Ray Mordaunt, standing in the archway between the curtains that draped off the conservatory, watched her with a smile on his handsome mouth, and an intense light in his eyes. And then, when for one moment she stood entirely alone in a retired spot, he walked over to her, pale as ashes.

"Miss Leith! Can you imagine how delighted I am to see you again?"

It had come—this supreme moment in her life. Alma felt a thrill of agony go over her for one little realizing span of time, and then she gave him her hand—so quiet, so indifferently, for he never, never should know she had cared. She looked at him fully from her shining eyes; he was just the same as ever, so grand, so nobly handsome.

"Indeed, I am glad to see you, Mr. Mordaunt. I have been expecting to meet you all the evening, for I had heard you were coming."

He looked smilingly back at her.

"So Mrs. Storey played me false, did she?"

I expressly told her I wished to take my Boston friends by surprise."

Alma's heart throbbed almost indignantly. Of course he wanted to take her by surprise to see how she would act. But she had been even him.

"I am not a Boston friend, however; Mrs. Storey has been guilty of no falsity."

She spoke coldly.

"But a friend, as of old, I hope, Miss Alma. What if I should say I had come from Philadelphia for the sole purpose of seeing you?"

Alma froze still more. What business had he to talk so to her—he, a married man?

"I should be very sorry indeed to think you

piece came into its rightful possession after so many long weary days, and Grace read it as she rocked her baby on her breast.

"MY DEAR FRIEND GRACE," it said, "I think you will hardly accuse me of being faint-hearted when I come to you to help me plead my cause with your cousin Alma, whom I love and desire to make my wife. But she is so coquettish, and so plain a woman, all I have to understand of her may be that she is not a woman of the world. I fear I may never be able to tell her all I mean. Yet, were this the only reason, I think I would surround it. But I have been told her affections are already engaged; if so, she will never come to me. But good friends, I have told her, have a chance with my darling. I shall anxiously look for the answer to this; if none comes, I shall not only know there is no hope for me, but that you regard me presumptuous in having ventured to plead your kindness."

"Yours very truly,
RAY MORDAUNT."

Mrs. Cecil read the letter with absorbing interest, the color coming and going on her cheeks.

"What a pity this has been mislaid—what a pity! There is no use speculating how it got in the big crack I remember so well. Some of the roguish Leith boys have, of course, done it for a joke. But what a pity it is! What misery it has made; for Alma loved him—I know she did!"

That night, at dinner, she told her husband all about it, and asked him what she should do.

"I should send it to Ray Mordaunt with the explanation," he said promptly. "If he has suffered no change in his feelings, he will be happy with Alma. If he is married or his affections have been given to any one else, not one but himself need know of the peculiar occurrence. Send it to him, Gracie, with one of your own especially nice letters—such as I know you can write."

Mrs. Cecil laughed.

"Will you never cease such delicious little compliments, Ross? And Alma—should she be written to as well?"

Mr. Cecil was most promptly emphatic.

"Certainly not, Grace. Let her never know of it unless Mordaunt himself tells her. Why need she know how near her happiness has been to her unless her lover will offer it again?"

So, all unconscious that Alma Leith had been the guilty cause of her own postponed—perhaps forever lost—happiness, Grace Cecil sat down to her desk and wrote to Ray Mordaunt, telling him the mysterious fate of the letter he had written, and giving him Alma's address, with her friend's was visiting in Boston—telling him, in the delicate way her husband in manner over-estimated, that if he still entertained the same feelings as when he wrote her she ventured to assure him he would not have to plead in vain with the woman who Grace thought had cared for him.

Mrs. Storey's reception rooms were delightfully filled that evening with the elite of Boston society, and among all the brilliant assemblage Alma Leith was without a peer for loveliness and grace and cultured dignity.

She had changed since that day over two years ago when, in yielding to a mean impulse, she had unwittingly destroyed the happiness that awaited her so nearly. She had never forgiven herself for the treacherousness of which her jealousy had made her guilty, although she knew that even the cruel wickedness of her act, had not been the cause of severing any ties between Grace Granger and Mr. Mordaunt.

But the effect both of her conscience and her unrequited affection for Ray Mordaunt had been very noticeable to one who knew her intimately well. She was so much more subdued, more quiet, more gentle. The appellative of coquette, which she had won in earlier days, and which Mr. Mordaunt had so justly applied to her, would have been entirely unmerited now, so gravely reserved had she become.

She suited her admirably—this new, tenderly sweet, half pathetic way she had, and more than one lover had offered himself in vain to her—in vain, because she had never, for one moment, loved another than Ray Mordaunt.

To-night, at Mrs. Storey's reception, Alma was looking unusually lovely. She had dressed herself in a light, lovely shade of apple-green tissue, ornamented with gracefully disposed tender pink-peach blossoms. Her white wrists and throat were circled by foamy lisse ruffles; and there were peach-blossoms in her dark brown hair.

"You never looked so fair, Alma," her cousin Gussie said, in an impulsive burst of admiration.

"And I am unusually glad, for there will be an opportunity to show off my pretty Western cousin to very aristocratic guests to-night. Mrs. Storey told Lillian that Mr. Mordaunt and his wife, from Philadelphia, would be there—the Mordaunts and Storeys are great friends."

As I dressed myself for my part in the evening's drama, I did not smile at the ridiculous figure; I never felt more solemn, more sad than when I set out upon my adventure. This was no farce, but an awful reality in which I was engaged. I made my way with dignity and life for my birthright in running the risk of detection; but this was not what I thought of.

I was to see Lillian; to have the sweet privilege of watching her, hour after hour; of sealing near to her unaware. I should hear her voice, meet the glance of her eye, her sable garments might sweep across my feet, perchance, for I should certainly put myself in her way. I knew that she would attend the party, and the reason why. Inez had insisted upon accepting the urgent invitation which they had personally received. Mrs. Chateaubriand herself had come to them and said that they need not dance nor sing, nor play, nor in any way make themselves popular; but she would love to have them there, and look on; they should have a quiet corner—it would do them good, etc., etc. Lillian had refused, with that gentle firmness which was one of her most admirable qualities; but, after their visitor had departed, Inez had burst into tears, stamped her foot on the floor, and declared that she would, and should, and must—she could not endure this sort of life any longer. Then my cousin, thinking it wiser to cover the imprudence of her father's widow by keeping her company, consented to go as a friend. But I was only seventeen, and he said to refuse all attentions of the gentlemen. Poor Lili! she already had accepted her place as mentor and guardian of one who should have been her adviser and protector.

As I was reporting myself to the housekeeper, on the important evening, Miss Miller came into the dining-room for a glass of water. She wore the velvet dress which she had had prepared for that other never-to-be-forgotten occasion, but the jewels were forgotten, except a small brooch.

She looked pale, almost haggard, ten years older than on that April day when she had bloomed into a second girlhood in expectation of the summer idlers. When she sat down, not the school-room, she sat in her chamber, or walked alone through the garden and woods. Many an evening I saw her sit for hours, immovable, her head leaning against the casement of her window.

Sometimes her brother Arthur called to see her. He was always welcomed by the ladies of the house. He knew how to make himself attractive: the Misses Chateaubriand, like all well-trained flirts, never had a superabundance of cavaliers—all was fish which came to their nets," in the way of gentlemen attendants, where morning parties and picnics, as well as summer gatherings, were the order of the day. A young man like a graceful, well-possessed, toned down to the amenities of civilization, to whom the opposite figure was likely to be doubly appreciated in the country. That his sister was their sister's governess made no especial difference with this appreciation on the part of the young ladies, since the young gentleman was "only for the summer," and not for all time."

I had a good view of the elder Miss Chateaubriand a few days after her arrival. I was perched among the branches of a hickory tree, across the way from Gram'me Hooker's house. It was a retired place, and had the air of being more airy and gay than the school-room, but I was not to be deceived; it was not for me to notice that the summer was ill and agitated; her hand trembled as she took the glass, which I hastened to hand her from the salver. I always did things audaciously, by bold strokes of impulse. I was willing to test my disguise than there; for I had reason to believe that if her sharp eyes did not detect it I need fear no other. She did start, when, on returning the glass, she looked at me, as she said, "thank you!" but I inferred that the thought or suspicion which might have momentarily occurred to her as I passed away, forgot that other, and said to myself, "I have no reason for keeping the peace."

Supper was not to be served until eleven o'clock; but I had opportunities for observation. I hung about the halls and doors after the manager of colored waiters when they have nothing else to do, and was very attentive to the wants of the guests.

I saw Lillian sitting by a table in the parlor, turning over a book of engravings. Many came and spoke with her, with a faint smile, and hardly lifting her eyes. I knew that she was trying to keep from crying. What a young thing she was to be so desolate, so only seventeen, and so cold to all with her flowing curls and fair forehead. How heavy and unnatural was that black dress on one who had always worn pink and blue and white! My heart throbbed so that I thought the people about me must hear it; and I went away, only to come back again and gaze as before. Inez stood near, her cheeks crimson and her dark Southern eyes blazing with excitement. I could see her little foot padding the floor to the music of the violins; but she refused the few offers which were made her to be taken to the ball-room. The large part of the company were up-stairs, they were restless as she found no companions desiring her. I hung about the halls and doors after the manager of colored waiters, when they were almost alone, to Lillian, "and I will not. But I would like to go up and look at them." Arthur Miller is there."

"I am not willing to marry poor."

"Then cease flirting with Inez; it is not safe to play with fire."

"It is she who is flirting with me; don't blame me for it. She began it before the Doctor's wife."

"I have half an idea that she may have means after all."

"Sis, what do you mean?"

"I have not watched you two all summer without results."

"Hang me, Annie, if I know what you are driving at."

"Arthur, you shall not trifling with me. Whatever you may have done, or contemplate doing, it is safer for you to confide in me. If I knew all, I might be prepared to assist, if difficulties arose."

"Speak more plainly, sis; no beating about the bush, please."

"With them, do you know if Mrs. Meredith has possession of the money supposed to have been stolen?"

There was silence; I strained my ear for the answer.

"Confound it, sis; I might as well ask if you know who put that quietus in the Doctor's wine, or what it was done for."

"Arthur?"

"Well, don't tease me, then. I know nothing of the old fellow's precious box, as I have told you again and again. I think we come to a standstill when one's over-sister—"

"Never mind, Arthur; I did not know but you might have been taken into the confidence of others. I do not like you to be so intimate with Mrs. Meredith—she's an unprincipled, un-disciplined young thing, quite unfitted by nature or education to make a good—even a tolerable wife. If you are willing to marry poor, why do you give up Lillian?"

"I'm not willing to marry poor."

"Then cease flirting with Inez; it is not safe to play with fire."

"It is she who is flirting with me; don't blame me for it. She began it before the Doctor's wife."

"I thought nothing serious of it; I should not like, now, to believe that his accident was owing to the power of my attractions."

"Don't!"

Her voice was a groan as she said it.

"Beg your pardon, Annie, but I really shouldn't; I should not rest well. I don't profess to read your sex very easily; you know I have guessed somebody else might have been jealous."

He hesitated, but she made no remark.

commit a crime, but she could face the consequences. Presently she came out, walking leisurely about the room; when she reached me she said:

"Waiter, I was so busy attending to the guests, I forgot my own wants. Will you give me an ice, now?"

I brought her the ice, and handed her a chair. She sank into it heavily; her paleness and haggardness had increased, but she did not tremble or appear nervous.

"Where do you live?" she asked. "I knew of no such person in this neighborhood—Watson, they said your name was?"

"Yes, m—"

Glancing around, and finding that no one was in our vicinity, she continued, in her ordinary tone:

"Your disguise is not as perfect as you might wish, Mr. Meredith. Let me advise you to leave here immediately, if you would consult your own safety."

"I can recognize you, why do you not raise the alarm?" I said, quite calmly, after my first start of surprise.

"I have no desire to take an active part in events; I would rather let them rest, if that were possible; indeed I would like to see you go away before it is too late—I have been fearing all the evening that you would be recognized, and—I hate scenes!"

"Why are you at Meredith Place?"

"My business brought me here; I came here in the most legitimate way, but you—"

"Have never left it."

"That is no news to me, Mr. Meredith. Since the night when I met you in the arbor, I have had no doubt of your vicinity—I knew when you first hunted this place. Are you watching me alone, or do others share in the honor of your regards?"

"Since you are so well advised, you ought to know."

"You stop with old Mrs. Hooker."

"That is true; pardon me, Miss Miller."

With a movement too sudden for her to anticipate or prevent, I snatched at a slender gold chain about her neck, and pulled the charm which was attached to it from its hiding-place.

"I have been very curious about this key." I said, holding it in my hand, with a piece of the broken chain.

She dared not struggle with me for it, for fear of drawing the attention of the servants. Her first impulse was to look about to find if my action had been noticed.

"Give it back to me—you shall not have it!"

"Is it your property?"

"I found it," she answered, without reflection.

"Where?"

"No matter—it is mine. It will do you no good."

I examined the key by the lamp which stood near. It bore the mark, "MADRID, 1800," an ancient affair, of silver, and of unique shape.

"I remember it now!" I exclaimed, so loud as to cause some of the servants to look round; "I remarked it at the time, but had forgotten it. It is the key to that box! When my uncle showed us his treasure, I remember that key was in the lock!"

"I know it; I found it after the—his death. If I could find the box, too, you might have both to restore to their rightful owners."

"I believe you were the first to insinuate that I had the box; that was the ingrate—the serpent which stung the bosom which warmed me!"

"I did—I thought so then; what else could I think?"

"Then you cannot complain that I entertained a similar opinion of you. You thought avarice prompted me; I believed you prompted me to have a right to our opinions, and to prove their truth if we can. About this key; what further good can it do you—you have tried everywhere to make it of use?"

"That is why I acquit you of knowing where that money is—because I have seen you looking for it."

"Oh! but I am sharper than that—my suspicions reach further. I have seen you looking for it, apparently, which may be all a pretense, to cover up your knowledge."

"Why don't you denounce me, then—I could scarcely escape from all these people?"

"I am not ready."

"I will borrow this key, for a time; if I find it of no use, I will return it to you in a year or two."

"In a year or two this tragedy will pass from the memory of men. One or two lives are blasted, but the world will forget."

"I shall never forget, nor rest. Know, that as long as I live, I am not resting nor forgetting!"

I placed the key in my pocket.

"It is not the key which is of value," she said, bitterly.

Just then Arthur, with five or six young gentlemen, came in to look for an extra bottle or two of champagne; they called upon me to furnish it.

"For shame!" I heard Miss Miller whisper to her brother; "you have had more than enough already"—a fact which I had suspected, when he so recklessly annoyed Mrs. Meredith.

I do not know what it was betrayed me, but as I silently brought the wine, Arthur grew quietly to watch me; this disconcerted me. I made an awkward movement; before I could defend myself, he sprang upon me, pulled my false hair from my head and face—

"Joe Meredith, as I'm alive! Secure him, boys!"

"Let him alone, brother Arthur!—do let him go!" pleaded Miss Miller, catching him by the arm, and speaking in an agonized whisper.

"Let him go! No, indeed! Why should I?"

The whole country has been looking for you, Joe!"

He thought he had been picked up as he was by half a dozen men; but I had no intention of being taken then. Retreating out of the room until I came opposite a door which led into the kitchen hall, I sprung over the table, knocked down the half-stupified waiters, who faintly groaned me, and to the music of crashing china and the shouts and cries of men and women, dashed down the passage and out into the darkness. By daylight I could not have escaped; as it was, I easily concealed my flight, and looking back, as I plunged into the forest, saw lights glimmering hither and thither in the grounds, and heard excited cries.

Mrs. Chateaubriand's ball was more of a sensation than she had anticipated.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 385.)

The Velvet Hand:

OR,

THE IRON GRIP OF INJUN DICK.

A Wild Story of the Cinnabar Mines.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "INJUN DICK," "OVERLAND KIT,"
"ROCKY MOUNTAIN ROB," "KENTUCK
THE SPORT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A LAST STAKE.

OLD Father Time in his eternal flight stays not, no matter how humbly we pray or how earnestly we curse; and so, dating from the night when the strange interview between the haughty California girl, Blanche del Colma and the Velvet Hand had taken place, ten days had passed, ten days fraught with much consequence to some of the characters in our story.

And to no one of them more than to Fernando del Colma, the tide of time furnished greater matter for anxiety.

The mortgage on the Cinnabar property came due; Del Colma was unable to raise the amount necessary to meet it, although he had worked like a horse to procure the money. But, in mining parlance, the Cinnabar property was "a bad egg." Men shook their heads when asked to advance the sum and take the mine for security.

The story of the lode was too well known in the town. That lead was possessed over by a demon who promised great stores of wealth, but who invariably ended by devouring the unlucky mortals who controlled the property.

"Yes, m—"

Glancing around, and finding that no one was in our vicinity, she continued, in her ordinary tone:

"Your disguise is not as perfect as you might wish, Mr. Meredith. Let me advise you to leave here immediately, if you would consult your own safety."

"I can recognize you, why do you not raise the alarm?" I said, quite calmly, after my first start of surprise.

"I have no desire to take an active part in events; I would rather let them rest, if that were possible; indeed I would like to see you go away before it is too late—I have been fearing all the evening that you would be recognized, and—I hate scenes!"

"Why are you at Meredith Place?"

"My business brought me here; I came here in the most legitimate way, but you—"

"Have never left it."

"That is no news to me, Mr. Meredith. Since the night when I met you in the arbor, I have had no doubt of your vicinity—I knew when you first hunted this place. Are you watching me alone, or do others share in the honor of your regards?"

"Since you are so well advised, you ought to know."

"You stop with old Mrs. Hooker."

"That is true; pardon me, Miss Miller."

With a movement too sudden for her to anticipate or prevent, I snatched at a slender gold chain about her neck, and pulled the charm which was attached to it from its hiding-place.

"I have been very curious about this key." I said, holding it in my hand, with a piece of the broken chain.

Payment being refused, the summary aid of the law was invoked; so rigidly had the papers been drawn that there was no chance for a delay. The court put the sheriff in possession of the property, and a day was set for a sale almost immediately.

After the legal process was executed and the strong arm of the law had wrested the property from the Californian, sullen and downcast Del Colma came in to his supper.

"Well?" Blanche questioned inquisitively, although from the look upon his face she easily guessed that the worst had transpired.

"It is all over," he answered; "the mine is now in the hands of the sheriff, and will be sold at public auction the day after to-morrow."

"Then you have lost all that you have invested?"

"Yes; there is only one chance to save anything from the wreck," he observed, thoughtfully. "The mortgage amounts to ten thousand dollars; the interest and legal expenses will be a couple of thousand more—about twelve thousand all told. Already I have invested double that; in fact, the mine stands me in over thirty thousand dollars. It is good property—I don't care what people say about it. It is as rich a mine as there is in all northern California, and will pay splendidly just as soon as it gets in good working order. Now, to pay off the mortgage would cost twelve thousand dollars, but at the auction sale the chances are a hundred to one that the entire property will not fetch over five or six thousand dollars, so great is the feeling against the lode on the part of the money-men of the town—the fools believe that it always brings bad luck to whoever owns it. If I could raise five or six thousand dollars, I would buy the property in—buy it in your name, for the law holds me answerable for the difference between the amount the place brings at the sale and the sum due from me. Of course as long as I have nothing, my creditors can get nothing, but with the mine running—and I am certain that the ore we are getting out now will pay handsomely—I could soon pay off the debt."

"But five or six thousand dollars is a large sum," the girl observed. "Can you get the amount?"

Fernando drummed with his fingers upon the edge of the table, by the side of which he had seated himself.

"I can't borrow it," he observed, after quite a long pause. "Nobody will loan on the unlucky hole."

Perhaps there may be some truth in the superstition; the mine has not brought good luck to us."

"One swallow does not make a summer," the brother retorted. "It is my evil fortune; the mine has had nothing to do with it."

"Perhaps not; but if you cannot borrow the money, then it is hopeless to think of still controlling the property."

"I don't know about that."

Blanche looked at her brother, inquiringly; it was plain that she had some plan in view.

"Do you not think that we ought to make some effort to retain the mine?" he continued.

"It seems a shame to lose so much," she replied.

"Perhaps there may be some truth in the superstition; the mine has not brought good luck to us."

"One swallow does not make a summer," the brother retorted. "It is my evil fortune; the mine has had nothing to do with it."

Was the cool and hardy sharp a believer, then, in the legend which gave to the golden lode the character of a destroying demon?

"If I had six thousand dollars I might be able to buy the mine in at the sheriff's sale."

"Yes; but six thousand dollars don't grow on every bush," Velvet Hand observed, tartly.

"You have managed to make that much out of me."

"Do you want me to give it back?" the Cinnabar man asked, sharply.

"Are we a couple of boys playing marbles in fun, the winnings to be returned when the game ends?"

The Californian was nettled by the speech, and threw his head up proudly.

"I ask favors from no man!" he cried, "and least of all from you. I have sought you out to-night to challenge you to play. Before morning dawns I intend to win six thousand dollars from you."

"Well, if you do that, I sha'n't be able to buy the Cinnabar mine, to-morrow, at the sheriff's sale."

Del Colma started as if he had trodden upon a snake.

"You buy the Cinnabar mine!" he cried.

"Why not? It will be sold to the highest bidder, won't it? Why shouldn't I buy as well as anyone else? I am getting rather tired of being a gambler—a card-sharper, that is what gentlemen like yourself term me, although you are all eager enough to try to win the money that we gamblers risk. When I become the owner of the Cinnabar lode, I shall be a gentleman—a man of property; I can play cards, too, just the same as ever, but I will not be a gambler any longer. You will observe that there is a great deal of difference between the man who plays cards for amusement and the man who plays that he may live."

Del Colma winced at the sarcasm.

"Of course you are at liberty to buy the mine if you bid high enough."

"I'll give thirteen thousand dollars for it, if I can't get it cheaper."

The Californian looked astonished; he had no idea that Velvet Hand possessed such a sum.

"Oh, I mean it!" the sharp exclaimed.

"Will you play with me to-night?" Fernando doffed abruptly.

"No."

"You are afraid to give me a chance to win my money back!"

"I said once that I wouldn't play with you again."

"You owe me my revenge, and you are no man if you refuse to give it to me!" Del Colma cried, hotly. "See this diamond ring, my sister's jewel, given by her freely in this last

extremity. It is all I have. It is worth five hundred dollars at the least, and I challenge you to put up that sum; take the ring, and then we will play."

"It's a bargain," cried Velvet Hand, abruptly. "I will buy the ring from you and give you five hundred for it, and you shall have the privilege of redeeming it at any time within a month."

"And you will play with me?" asked the Californian, eagerly.

"Yes; as long as you have a cent of money left," Velvet Hand replied, with cool irony.

The two men rose to their feet, and down the hill-side to the town they went; straight to the Occidental Hotel where proceeded, secured a room, laid in a stock of cards and candles, and immediately proceeded to work.

The game proceeded at first with varying fortunes, but as midnight approached luck deserted the Californian, and with the stroke of twelve he sat a haggard, penniless man.

The thousand dollars lay in a heap on Velvet Hand's side of the table.

He drew from his pocket two bags, one marked a thousand and the other five hundred, and placed them beside the heap of coins.

"Your sister is a charming girl; when I own the Cinnabar mine, I shall be a suitable match for any woman in California. I'll put up this twenty-five hundred dollars against your consent in writing to my wooing her, and take the chance of a single cut out of the cards."

In desperation the Californian consented.

He cut the cards and displayed a jack.

Velvet Hand cut and showed a queen.

This operation was very adroitly performed so as not to excite attention. First-class hotels don't like to have it even supposed that suspicious characters can gain admittance at any time.

"Great heaven! Why do you ask?" exclaimed the stranger, in the extravagant, theatrical manner, so natural to him.

"You're not a guest of the hotel, and I want to know what you were doing up stairs, Come, speak out quick or I'll hand you over to the police," the clerk replied.

"External powers! You would not dream of such an outrage!" the Italian exclaimed, not loudly, but in great astonishment, apparently.

"I will unless you give a satisfactory explanation."

"Listen then, although I protest against this interrogation," the Italian responded with great dignity. "I am an artist—the Signor Castiglione of the Grand Opera—a call I have had the honor to make upon the Mademoiselle Winne. I am poor; genius struggles ever with the dark angels of adversity. Mademoiselle Winne is as good as she is beautiful. I have come to her and tell my sad story, and she opens her purse-strings, bright, beautiful angel! and I now depart happy."

The clerk was inclined to believe this story, for his experience with the "children of genius" in the stage and opera line had brought him in contact with some pretty seedy customers. It was plain that the man was a gentleman, and he talked like an artist—a child of the Bohemian tribe; therefore the clerk apologized for his mistake, and explained how necessary it was to be cautious in a city hotel in regard to strangers.

"Say no more; it was your duty; from the bottom of my soul do I admire men who do their duty perform!" the Italian, grandiloquently. "Pardon, signor, but will you favor me by taking a glass of wine with me? Everywhere I go, I hear it said there is no wine in America to compare with the nectar of the Fifth Avenue."

"Oh, excuse me; but you must take a drink with me!" replied the clerk, who was a jolly fellow naturally.

The Italian protested that he couldn't think of such a thing, but he marched up to the bar nevertheless and took his whisky like a man.

This social operation performed, he laid his skinny finger upon the arm of the other.

"The Mademoiselle Winne is an angel; with her money she is as free as water; at present I struggle in the waves of adversity. I, Phillippe de Castiglione, who as the principal tenor have sung before the kings and queens of Europe in all the good theaters—the Opera, Paree, La Scala, Milan. Here in America the directors do not see it; they go back on me, diavolo! I starve but for that bright angel, the Mademoiselle Winne! I presume there will be no objection to my coming here to see her sometimes!"

"Oh, no, now that we know who you are."

The clerk hadn't a doubt in regard to the man's story. He was so much like the genuine article—the imported artist, "down on his luck"—that even the experienced hotel man was taken in.

"Thanks! In my prayers I shall remember your kindness, and when I make my "hit"—the time will come—and all New York is at my feet throwing largess, I will not forget my generous benefactor! No! your kindness repay I will a thousand-fold!" And then, with a graceful, dignified bow, the Italian marched out of the hotel.

Outside, a comrade awaited the signor.

An Italian, too, apparently, but quite a contrast to the noble count, being short and thick and fat. He was dressed in a shabby and black suit, much too large for him, and a dozen years at least behind the prevailing fashion.

Like the other, his coat was buttoned up tight in the throat, and no linen was visible. It was odds that he didn't possess any.

His face, like his person, was fat, very dark in color, the chin ornamented by a peaked beard, and the thick-lipped mouth shaded by a huge mustache, the ends carefully waxed. His little, evil-looking eyes were like two jet-black beads, and the smell of garlic that came from his person was enough to sicken one who detested that pungent vegetable, so dear to the Latin races.

Colonel Anselmo del Frascati, this individual was called, and, as if to give proof that he had a right to the military title, he bore a switch in his hand, which he either flourished, sabre-like, in the air, or else beat against the legs of his pantaloons.

"Ha, ha!" he exclaimed, as the tall man emerged from the hotel, "you have been long! How goes the fight? Did she see ze point, he?"

The count shook his head.

"And you got nothing, diavolo?"

The count displayed a single half dollar.

"Bah! that is a dinner only; did you tell her of ze half-a-million, he?"

"Yes."

"And she nothing make of it, hem?"

"No."

"I have a-wait for you some time."

"Be calm, my friend," and he laid his skinny finger on the greasy coat-sleeve of the other. "I have made the acquaintance of one of the hotel young men. I am a singer at the opera and come to see the Mademoiselle Winne as a brother artist."

"Ha, ha! it is good—beautiful—divine!"

"Come, we will dine!"

The two proceeded down the street, and as they went, the saucy Italian unfolded his plan.

"If we do not succeed—if the heir we do not find, a prize we can make here," and the speaker nodded back to the hotel.

"Diavolo! that is superb; how?"

"Jewels—real, no paste!" the count explained, mysteriously. "Five thousand dollars worth—more, maybe. I am an opera singer; they will not suspect me in the hotel, for I call upon the Mademoiselle Winne. The lock is nothing—bah! a child could open it; so easy!"

"Ten devils, but that is good!"

"We can make no money out of the half-a-million; we watch our chance and steal the jewels. South America is near; many countries of ours there; we will go. Five thousand dollars; it is a fortune!"

"But I have ze other girl found."

"Ha, ha!"

"Ze image of ze picture, but hair dark!"

"Good! We will have our pickings out of the half million, after all!"

CHAPTER X.

RONALD CRAIGE.

The farce with which the evening's performance commenced at Wallack's was over; the farce was merely to play the audience into their seats so that the burlesque might be displayed to a full house, and to those who did come early the farce was as a sort of appetizer to prepare the mind for the full enjoyment of the attraction of the evening.

With the farce Ronald Craige's duties for the evening terminated, as he was not gifted with the talents necessary to the burlesque artist. He could neither sing a comic negro song, nor dance the soul-inspiring breakdown; flip-flops were foreign to his nature; nor could he assume the garb of the other sex and charm an enlightened audience by a coarse caricature of a pretty woman.

And therefore, as the young man was a student and a gentleman, one who had embraced the stage from sheer love of the player's art, it naturally followed that he held a subordinate position at the meager salary of twenty dollars per week, out of which he was expected to dress in the height of fashion, while the burlesque artists' pay ranged from thirty per week up to a thousand.

But the young man had chosen his vocation, and although heartily sick of the life couldn't very well get out of it—so crowded are all the avenues that lead to a competence, nowadays.

A sober, steady, hard-working young fellow was the actor, with few enemies, and not a great many friends either, for the semi-wild life common to nearly all the followers of the stage was not at all to his liking. He was emphatically a student and all the time was studying hard, striving to fit himself for some other pursuit than the one which he was now following.

The artist world that knew Ronald Craige called him proud and stuck-up, and resented his holding himself aloof from their gay gatherings.

But the young man was not proud; he was simply a gentleman in his instincts, who chose to pick his associates.

Some of the sons and daughters of the Thespian art are as worthy people as can be found in all the wide world; but then, there are others, so tainted in mind and morals, that to be compelled to associate with them was, to a pure-hearted fellow like Ronald Craige, as dreadful as to herd with the felon hosts of Sing Sing.

And because he held apart from these unworthy creatures, the bane and degradation of a noble art—pure in itself as its sisters, painting and sculpture—the artist-world "made mouths" at the young man.

Little he cared though, for he was striving with all his might to escape from the circle of fire which surrounded him; if the world in which he now lived was angry because he would not associate with it, he despised that world and its opinion.

The beautiful burlesque actress, the dashing Avis Winne, could not understand why the young man seemed so dull to the favor which she was lavishing upon him. He was not blind, did not lack sense, and yet he did not manifest the slightest interest in Avise Winne, although, just at that time, half the empty-headed young men—some old ones too, for that matter—in New York were running madly after the charming queen of the blondes.

Avis, shrewd and cunning, believed that she had a rival, and so she had dispatched her man-of-all-work, the patient and untiring Timoleon, in quest of information, and with what result the reader already knows.

At nine o'clock Craige had changed his stage costume for his usual street dress, and was on his way home.

Avis, as usual, had taken particular care to encounter him as he made his way to the back-door of the theater, as she invariably did, every evening, so as to be able to exchange a few words with him.

The actress' intent was so apparent that the young man could not very well avoid her, but with his cool, easy politeness he never gave her cause to hope that he was being roused to that pitch of passion which was raging within her fair veins. A few commonplace remarks he would make, then bid her "good-night" and depart, leaving the proud young actress ready to dash out in open rage.

Straight to his home Craige proceeded, and as he walked along, he mused upon the peculiar position in which he was placed.

"Deuce take the girl!" he muttered, thoroughly vexed by Avise Winne's open and avowed liking, so keenly expressed. "She has got everybody talking about us now! What on earth has got into her? I should think that she could see with half an eye that I don't care for her, and that I am trying to keep away from her all I can. I shall get into trouble, soon. She will get angry, and if she chooses to try, she can have my engagement annulled; women do these mean things sometimes; and then I shall probably be obliged to live idle all summer, and spend the little sum that I've put by for a rainy day. I can see no way to avoid the difficulty. I can't bear the girl, and I'm not going to lie to her. It will be either love or hate, and as I can't go to the former, I presume the latter will soon come."

And now we will take advantage of the glare of the gaslight, as the actor passes, to take a good look at him, and we do not wonder at the preference so keenly shown by the blonde burlesque queen for the young man.

In person about the medium height, well-built and finely proportioned; clearly-cut features, regular and pleasing; honest brown eyes, chestnut hair, curling slightly, broad forehead, plenty of room for brains there—in fine, a general appearance calculated to win friends at the first glance.

The actor had turned into Broadway, after leaving the theater, the walk down through New York's great artery being so much more pleasant than the way through the side-streets; then he had gone through Grand street until he arrived at the corner of Grand street and Baxter. He had been closely followed by two men who could not have stuck to him better if they had been his shadow, by some miracle doubled.

And these two men were afraid, too, that the actor would discover that they were following him, for they took particular pains to keep in the shadows as much as possible.

But as Craige hadn't the slightest idea that anyone would trouble their head about him in such a fashion, the precaution of the two men was clearly needless.

As the actor walked up Baxter street toward the old brick barracks, where he had his quarters, he noticed that there were two figures standing upon the stoop, busy in conversation. And as he came nearer he could distinguish that one was a woman and the other a man.

And just as he ascertained this, the man raised his hat politely, bid the female good-night, a salutation which she returned, and then he came down the street toward Grand, passing within arm's-length of the actor.

Craige had recognized the voice of the woman; it was the Bouquet Girl, Frank, and a

natural curiosity therefore made him take a good look at the man with whom she had been talking, the more so, because he saw that the stranger was dressed in the height of style—in fact, a little over-dressed.

The man, busy with his own thoughts, passed by the actor without noticing him in the least, but Craige recognized him at once, although not personally acquainted with him, for Captain Jack Leipper, the famous divorce lawyer, was one of the notables of New York; a well-informed man who was not acquainted with the dashy figure of the lawyer, always so elegantly attired.

The actor, upon discovering who the gentleman was, stood still for a moment and looked after him.

The girl standing upon the stoop of the old barracks was surely the Bouquet Girl; he had clearly recognized her voice; but what business had this notorious divorce lawyer with her?

Determined to solve the riddle at once, the actor proceeded straight to the house. The two men who had followed him were snugly laid in a dark doorway on the other side of the street.

"Why, Frank, what did that fellow want?" the actor asked.

"Not much," answered the girl, smiling a glad welcome; "he only wants to make me a present of half a million of dollars."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 387.)

THE CHANGE OF TIME.

BY A. W. BELLAW.

"Tis said the seasons of the blood
Are even seven-years orb'd run,
And then the man is changed in man
As old as he was over and done.

But, oh, what changes come to us,
Who go through years and tears and truth,
Star'd toward love's Bethlehem,
In the warm tenor of our youth?

And the old cronants, thronging thick,
Have hardly left us chance for change;
Our swallow hearts are round the nest
From whence their wings can never range.

Stories of a Pulman Car.

BY HENRY MONTCALM.

THE BELLOOCHISTAN BROTHERS.

[TH: FLASHY MAN'S STORY.]

My story w'n't compare very favorably with the one you've just heard, except in p'nt of truth (began the rough-looking, flabby-faced man, who, in spite of his huge watch-chain and loud manner, evidently had a kind heart under his plaid waist-coat), and I reckon I rather hold over my story-telling friend in that regard. I can't tell it as gib and ready-like as he did, either. I never had much schoolin', and I expect I shall mix things up a good deal. I've been banging about the world with travellin' circuses ever since I was ten years old. It's possible you may have heard of me sometime or other, and it's possible you hain't. I'm one of the Blue Brothers of Belloochistan. We were called "Blue" on the bills to draw attention; and as for Belloochistan, the tamed Indians and the mule-riding, and then "The Blue Brothers of Belloochistan, assisted by Master Harry, the Infant Prodigy." The swings were let down and arranged, and we three came bounding into the ring, and were greeted with rapturous applause, especially Master Harry, who was a favorite wherever we went.

We had a good audience that afternoon—we alius did in country towns, for in the country folks comes ten miles to see a good show—and the Grand Entree never was finer, and Madame Celeste never more graceful, nor Captain Josephine never more glorious in his Twelve-in-Hand Bareback Exploit. Then came the trained horse Excalibur, then the tamed Indians and the mule-riding, and then "The Blue Brothers of Belloochistan, assisted by Master Harry, the Infant Prodigy." The swings were let down and arranged, and we three came bounding into the ring, and were greeted with rapturous applause, especially Master Harry, who was a favorite wherever we went.

I went up first, for—as I have said—being the strongest and heaviest I was generally above. Then came Joe and I took his seat on the bar by my side, and then, like a young monkey, Master Harry climbed swiftly up the rope and placed himself between us. We did not exert ourselves specially at first, saving the best for the last. Separately each went on to the upper bar—first Joe, then I, and finally little Harry, each winning in turn rounds of applause from the people on the seats. Then Joe and I took the bar and went through our whole programme of double-posturing, and we were without equals at that time if I do say it. And there wasn't many difficult or dangerous postures possible which we didn't execute, you may be sure—and all as easy and calm as if we'd been five feet from the ground, with a featherbed below, instead of full forty and nothing on if we slipped. Yet why shouldn't we be easy and calm when we'd been through it a thousand times before, and knew each other perfectly once in a while as I met Joe's eyes I caught slinking back in them a hateful, treacherous look that was new to them, and for the instant I felt nervous.

But it's about the Belloochistan Brothers I was goin' to tell you. Joe and I had a big reputation in them days, though possibly, as I say, you may never have heard of us. Ours was the trapeze line—a new thing then—and we drew better than any other names on the bills. And we got our prices, too. I wasn't as heavy then as I be now, and was strong as a bull; and Joe, he wasn't as muscular as I was but he was lighter. That's why he allus took the lower hold and I the upper. Why, Lord bless you, he could turn twice to my once and was a fast flier.

He had been so long together that we got quite fond of each other, Joe and I. We called ourselves a kind of partnership—we two—and nobody else was ever admitted till one day the manager came to us and wanted us to take Master Harry on the trapeze with us. The boy was handsome and smart and he thought that we three together might do some very pretty posturing. Joe—he was allus a gruff kind of feller anyway and nobody ever liked him unless they knew him well—he refused right up and down; but I rather liked the idea myself and I worked him over. I had taken a notion to the boy Harry the first time he came among us—a sad-eyed, intelligent, gentlemanly little fellow who never ought to have been there. I came to love him as though he had been my very own before many weeks, and he got to thinkin' a heap of me. Poor little kid! that was natural enough when I was the only one that didn't sold him and abuse him the whole time. And after a while, he told me his story—and a sad enough story it was. He never would tell me his real name, nor where he come from—he had an old head on him, Harry did, and he had a kind of morbid idea that if it were known who his folks were, or if he went back to them now, after his circus life, that he should disgrace them forever. So he stayed with us, though I knew that life was a burden to him in the circus and he would rather have died than not—and indeed he couldn't well help himself, for Pinkham threatened to whip him to death if he tried any games on him—and as I say, though Harry would never tell me even very much about his old life, yet I did get this much out of him, that his father was very rich, and lived in a big house, and had lots of fine people come and see him—only Harry had never been happy there because his father did not love him at all, and gave all his love to Charlie. Charlie was Harry's brother and was jest his age and size, only Charlie's eyes were blue instead of dark, and his hair was just like gold. And they loved each other dearly, and Harry knew Charlie must have cried when he went off down the road and never came back any more. Only Harry could not live like that, with his

father hating him; so he ran away to join a circus—a life that seemed all gold and sunshine to him. Ah, gentlemen, he found out soon enough that the gold was only brass and the sunshine pretty much storm.

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THE OLD STORY.

BY JOE JOT, JR.

No matter how hard I strove
To keep his nature single-sided,
That simple boy has fallen in love,
And made a fool o' himself—as I did.
I told him of the unsmooth road
Love's doubtful fires so dimly lighted,
Of wild unrest and weary load:
He wants to prove it—just as I did.
That rogue from hence will not amount
To half of what he said and hearted,
For now he will be no account,
And think of little else—as I did.
I told him all the folly of
(And in my logic much I prided),
And fallacies of childish love;
But precepts he disdained—as I did.
I told him there was ample time,
That there were higher things beside it,
The which to lose would be a crime,
But he got hasty—just as I did.
I told him love at twenty-one
Is very apt to be short-sighted;
At thirty if he stands to lose,
He thought so neither—just as I did.
There's business and arts of trade
To turn his thoughts to, undivided,
(The same wise words the grand said)
And yet he goes and goes—as I did.
A simple soul has warped his mind
Out of the course which I provided,
And the seagrapes are surely blind
To do the very thing—that I did!
I said that puppy love was vain,
And thought with me he coincid—d:
That youthful spoonies are not sane;
And now he proves it—just as I did.
I spoke of heart-aches, jealous fears,
When youthful faiths are once confid,
How smiles will number less than tears,
And yet he wouldn't—just as I did.
The scamp, he thinks he knows it all,
And took advice but to deride it;
A young scamp's views are always small,
And so they go it—just as I did.
Our head but not our hearts are gray,
Dear wife, since first we were united,
Who knows but yet the rascal may
Have just the happy luck—that I did?

Schamyl.

THE CAPTIVE PRINCE:

OR,

The Cossack Envoy.

A Story of Russian Life and Adventure.

BY LAUNCE FOYNTZ,

AUTHOR OF "LANCE AND LASSO," "THE SWORD-HUNTERS," "CAVALRY CUSTER," ETC.

X

ZISKA HOFFMAN NO MORE!

WHEN one saw the brothers Schamyl together, it seemed wonderful that their relationship had never been suspected before. Prince Hamet Schamyl was taller than Ziska and larger in every way, but their faces were exactly alike. There were the same haughty aquiline profile of the true Caucasian type, the same dark curling hair, and both had the same large dark eyes. Their figures were very similar, and both had the same easy aristocratic air of superiority that marks the descendant of a noble family accustomed from infancy to be obeyed.

Between the two, and dressed much in the same style, was the tall and swarthy figure of the Grand Duke Michael Nizhnevitych, brother to the Czar and Governor-General of the Caucasus Provinces. He seemed to be on friendly terms of comradeship with both his companions, for they were all talking French together with freedom. The escort behind them was composed of the dark-coated Daghestani Cossacks, with a number of glittering mail-clad Circassians, among whom Mustapha recognized several chiefs who had been stationed with their men at the opposite side of the valley ready for the contemplated attack.

Ziska Schamyl waved his hand to the old warrior as he rode up, and spoke to the Grand Duke. "Your imperial highness has been hunting Hadji Mustapha for several years, I believe. Yonder he stands."

The Governor-General uttered a surprised exclamation.

"Mon Dieu! is it possible? Hadji Mustapha, the insurgent chief who stirred up all Daghestan and the Terek district to revolt? Why, I thought him a strong young warrior."

"Of his strength there is no doubt," said Ziska, quietly. "If he is gray it is with plotting surprises for the troops that have barred him from his old home."

"Morbleu! you are right," laughed the Grand Duke, in his good-natured manner. "He has given us nearly as much trouble as my father had with yours."

"And when he has given his word, he will keep it as strictly as my father kept faith with your brother," said Hamet Schamyl, gravely. "With your imperial highness greet him first, and do him honor! It is not every day his majesty has such a chance to strengthen the dominions of Russia."

"By all means," said the Grand Duke, heartily.

By this time they were close to the old man, who sat on his horse like a statue, his face set and stern. He was evidently undergoing a severe mental struggle. Then the big Russian prince advanced to him with a frank smile. All the royal family of the Romanoffs for several generations have been handsome portly men, and Grand Duke Michael was no exception. He had the same winning courtesy which men of very high rank always cultivate, to be used on occasion. Having been in supreme command in the Caucasus for many years he was well acquainted with the mountain dialects, and at once addressed the old chief, saying:

"Hadj Schamyl, you and yours have fought the White Czar for many years like brave men, but when the sons of Schamyl have made peace it is time for their father's old friend to make it too. I am empowered to offer you, as I offered the Emir Schamyl before you, the favor and protection of the Czar, if you will make peace. He will give you a house, servants and money, if you wish to remain at home."

Hadji Mustapha waved his hand. "I have sworn," he said. "I cannot take service with the Czar in Russian lands. I have done all I can to please the sons of Schamyl, but I must go where he went and die where he died."

"Be it so," said the prince, kindly. "You shall have your liberty on parole and the Czar will pay you a pension of ten thousand roubles, as long as the hill tribes are kept quiet. Will that do?"

"It is the will of Allah," said the old chief, with a sigh. "I have kept up the battle when others would have made peace, and they have rewarded me by deserting me at the last hour of the day. I will make peace, and the Tcherkess may serve the Czar if they will. I am with them no more."

"Then give me your hand and let us eat salt upon our agreement," said the Grand Duke. "After all what is a rascally Turk that he should come between us? The Turks have used the Tcherkess as a man uses his dogs. They have fought for him and he has kicked and starved them."

"It is true," said the old warrior. "Nevertheless it is well that we heard the trumpet of Schamyl to-day, for great would have been the slaughter had a shot been fired instead."

The Grand Duke laughed again.

"I believe it. But you see these young princes have more sense than you had. You

would have made a battle and killed some men, but you are no stronger than Schamyl, and he was glad to make peace at last. For every man you could have killed to-day Russi has a thousand and ready to take his place. It is enough. Let us come."

With the old warrior on his right hand and followed by the two sons of Schamyl, the Grand Duke Michael rode back into the Russian camp, filled with the light of morning.

As they rode along they passed the camp of regiment after regiment of Cossacks, the men cleaning their horses or at breakfast, everything peaceful and quiet. They passed through the forest in the valley, on to the hard white road that had gleamed through the darkness when Ziska and the officer of the outpost rode off to find the governor-general. It was the great military road from Alexandropol to Kars. Now that it was morning one could see not five miles away, the frowning towers and ramparts of the long valley, and turned round to the other side the sun glinted back from far away on the gilded domes and minarets of Kars. It was a long way off in the low country but still in plain view, dominated by the great isolated hill of the Kara Dag. The valley in which they were seemed to open out toward Kars, and one could see the white road going winding out of the mountain gorges toward it, over a country all sprinkled with white camps.

"You see, Hadji Mustapha," said the Grand Duke, pointing, "your three or four thousand men would have been a drop of water in the sea. Yonder are the camps of a hundred battalions of infantry."

The end.

"Why Prince Hamet, of course! These mountaineers stick to each other like wax. The Czar sent him here to pacify the tribes and make friends with his brother. He saw that his brother's friends, the Nihilists, were likely to be betrayed. Who knows? He may be a Nihilist himself! At all events, he saved their secret by killing the traitor, and the murderer fled to the hills. Who is going to catch him for shooting a spy?"

"And what brought the other one here to-day?"

"Why, common sense of course! He's not been at Paris and New York for nothing. Any fool can see which is the winning side. John in this war he and his brother have done to make good terms with the Grand Duke. I hear they're to be given high commands in the army. Why not? They have played their cards well, and the sons of Schamyl deserve well of Russia."

The end.

"Spare that man!—spare Ben Marrow, men!"

Scarcely had the words fallen from his lips ere two of Ben Marrow's friends, coming to their captain's rescue, shot Little Lightning and the two robbers dead in their tracks.

A wild, agonized cry burst from the Boy Robber's lips, as he sunk down, pressing his mask close to his face.

The battle was over. Every robber had been killed or wounded, though at a severe cost to Ben Marrow. Over half his men had been killed or wounded.

This was the first time that Little Lightning had been defeated since he had become so notorious as a robber, and his death and the destruction of his band gave a general feeling of relief throughout the country.

Every robber wore a mask of black velvet and as Ben Marrow's friends dashed at one of them with their sabers, the boy and his brother's familiar face revealed. It was the face of a miner of Red Pine—one who had been regarded as an honorable man, and who was a member of the Vigilance Committee there.

Ben Marrow was shocked by this discovery, and at once made examination of the other gashly faces around him. Presently he came to the body of Little Lightning.

The young robber lay with hand—a small, white, delicate hand—pressed upon his mask, as if his last thought and impulse had been to keep his face concealed. Ben laid the limp, lifeless hand aside, and raising the mask, gazed upon the face of the Boy Robber. But at the same instant a cry burst from his lips; he reeled and clutched at his mask, as if he would have fallen had a man's hand caught him.

"Bare what ails you?" his friend exclaimed. "Look, Ferey! Oh, God! look at that face!"

Percy gazed upon the face of the Boy Robber. A cry burst from his lips, for he saw that the face of Little Lightning was that of Inez La Joss, the idol of Red Pine! She was the mysterious Boy Robber.

Of this there was no doubt in the mind of Ben Marrow, for upon a finger of the small white hand, that now lay lifeless and limp, flashed the signet of their betrothal.

Inez's love had only been a blind to draw the wealth of Marrow's train into the possession of her followers; but the brave, handsome and wicked woman paid the penalty of her deception.

And so the day of her birth was the day of her death; and the wife that was to have been drunk to her health by Ben Marrow and his men, remained untouched; and as the sun of August the twentieth went down, it shone for the last time upon all that remained upon earth of Inez La Joss.

The end.

Little Lightning.

THE BOY ROBBER.

BY OLL COOMES.

An evening wind toyed with the featherly robes of the greenwood trees, and wafted the balsamic odors of the forest through the valley. The Fairy's Cascade sung musically under the azeleas, as if to cheer up the spirit of the man pacing to and fro under a stately pine near the water's brink.

The man could not have been over five-and-twenty, and was possessed of a handsome face, whose features told of a brave, kind heart, and a gallant, dashing spirit in Captain Ben Marrow.

For all of an hour had he paced the shadows by the little cascade, when all of a sudden the form of a woman came from the distant shadows and approached him. His face lit up with a smile of recognition. He was there to meet the woman by appointment.

"Good-evening, my dear Inez," Ben Marrow said, taking her little hand in his and imprinting a passionate kiss upon it; "I have been here an hour and it seemed so very, very long. I almost gave you up coming."

"I am sorry to keep you waiting, Ben," she replied in a soft, musical voice.

A lovely creature was Ben Marrow's sweet-heart, Inez La Joss—a royal, Spanish beauty, with dark, lustrous eyes, raven tresses, and form moulded with all the graces of womanhood. She was the idol of the mining camp of Red Pine, and the daughter of a selfish and cold-hearted father who refused Ben Marrow admittance to his cabin; and even forbade him speaking to Inez. But love is ingenious, and cannot be held in bonds, and often Inez and Captain Ben met in secret by the Fairy's Cascade.

"Do you start east to-morrow, Ben?" Inez asked, after they had conversed some time.

"Yes, Inez, I can do any departure no longer; but I hope I will not be away long. Just as soon as we reach our destination and fit out our train, we will start back."

"Oh, do be careful, Ben!" the fair maiden begged; "you know the Indians and robbers are as bad now. Already two valuable trains have been captured this summer, and the men all killed by the robbers under the notorious Boy Robber, Little Lightning."

"I shall look out for that young scurge, Inez; do not fear. I have crossed plains and mountains too often to be trapped by Indians or road-agents."

"Will you have a very valuable train, Ben?" Inez asked.

"Very, Inez," replied Ben in a whisper.

"Do them not pray," she continued, "be very careful for my sake. Life will be a blank without you, Ben."

"God bless you, darling!" Ben exclaimed, folding her to his breast. "I hope your father will think better of me when I come back, and that he will consent to our marriage."

"Then you will not forget me when you go back to your old home and all its fascinations?" she said, smiling.

"No, Inez; never; you alone shall ever claim my love; and, as a seal to our betrothal, let me place this upon your finger."

He lifted her hand and slipped a hoop of gold upon her finger. She gazed upon the golden band with a strange, wild look of joy.

For some time neither spoke, their hearts alone holding silent communion.

"Where will you be, Ben, the evening of August the twentieth?" Inez finally asked.

"I do not know exactly, Inez; but why do you ask?"

"It is my birthday, Ben," she said. "It has always been customary for our people and friends to celebrate that event; and as I am superstitious enough to think that good comes out of celebrating one's birthday, I hope you will not forget the twentieth and me."

"Let me see; by the twentieth of August we will be well on our way back to Red Pine; but no difference, wherever we are, I shall not forget to drink to your health. I will bring along some fine wine for that purpose; and, as the sun goes down on the evening of the twentieth, I will drink to thee with my men."

Having thus promised to satisfy the fair maiden's wish, the two lovers parted. Inez sauntered leisurely back to Red Pine, while Captain Marrow sought his own camp.

Two months went by. A wagon train was encamped in a narrow, wooded pass of the Rocky Mountains leading toward Red Pine. It was the train of Captain Ben Marrow, who was returning from Denver with his loads of merchandise and goods for the different mining camps.

The horses had all been picketed out to grass, guards stationed up and down the pass, supper prepared and eaten.

The sun was just going down when Captain Marrow said, as he produced a bottle of rich old wine and a silver goblet from his camp chest:

"Boys, this is the evening of the twentieth of August. It is Inez La Joss's birthday, and I promised her we would drink to her health."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Brown Percy. "I presume you'd cut your head off if she told you to."

"Not so bad as that Brown," replied the captain.

"Well, what else?" asked Groganoff.

"That's the queer part of the story, and the only man who could have told us was shot at Tiflis," said Andrei. "It seems that he and the Nihilists raised a regiment of Cossacks, and started to create a rebellion in favor of the Turks, and at the last moment he deserted the Nihilists and went over to the Czar's side. He only made one false move. He allowed the police spy to live, and the fellow was going to tell all the secrets of the Nihilists to the Grand Duke, when he was shot by a Circassian on the pretext of an old feud."

Andrej laughed.

"I think I know more about that part of the story than you do, Andrei. I happened to be the officer of the guard the day the spy was shot. It was a great trick to stop the fellow's mouth, and the fellow who did it got off, too. It was the Grand Duke Michael's own orderly of an old feud."

"Well, what else?" asked Groganoff.

"Then give me your hand and let us eat salt upon our agreement," said the Grand Duke. "After all what is a rascally Turk that he should come between us? The Turks have used the Tcherkess as a man uses his dogs. They have fought for him and he has kicked and starved them."

Hadji Mustapha waved his hand. "I have sworn," he said. "I cannot take service with the Czar in Russian lands. I have done all I can to please the sons of Schamyl, but I must go where he went and die where he died."

"Be it so," said the prince, kindly. "You shall have your liberty on parole and the Czar will pay you a pension of ten thousand roubles, as long as the hill tribes are kept quiet. Will that do?"

"It is the will of Allah," said the old chief, with a sigh. "I have kept up the battle when others would have made peace, and they have rewarded me by deserting me at the last hour of the day. I will make peace, and the Tcherkess may serve the Czar if they will. I am with them no more."

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"It is true," said the old warrior. "Nevertheless it is well that we heard the trumpet of Schamyl to-day, for great would have been the slaughter had a shot been fired instead."

The Grand Duke laughed again.

"I believe it. But you see these young princes have more sense than you had. You

you might have got a sharper answer than you counted on."

The big man laughed as he climbed into the wagon, followed by his companions.